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ABSTRACT

The paper examined occupational projections and orientations of an American Indian group, the Mississippi Choctaws. Two related problems currently facing the tribe are the low educational and skill levels of its population and persistently high unemployment rates. In 1973, permission was granted to study the occupation and residential aspirations and expectations of 133 students in Choctaw Central High School, the only high school for Choctaws in the State. Since the cultural and socioeconomic background of the Indians may cause their occupational status hierarchy to vary from that of the larger society, the study was expanded to include the "general standing" of occupations among the Indians. Data analysis suggested that student aspirations were limited by locally visible and relevant jobs and occupations that other Choctaws have attained. Findings also indicated that, while almost all Choctaw youths aspired to occupations which have high or moderate status within their own subsociety, many of these rank substantially lower by standards of the larger society. This suggested that researchers should take the possibility of variant occupational perceptions into consideration in assessing the occupational aspirations and expectations of minority youths. They further suggest the need for an examination of the prestige assigned to occupations by isolated populations. (KM)

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OCCUPATIONAL ORIENTATION AMONG THE CHOCTAW INDIANS

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Mississippi State University

A paper prepared for presentation at the 69th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, August 25-29, 1974.

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OCCUPATIONAL ORIENTATION AMONG THE CHOCTAW INDIANS*

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Introduction

The occupational projections of youth have been a major research problem in sociology for the past 20 years.[1] Many recent studies of the aspirations of youth have shown that high aspirations generally cross racial boundaries (Picou and Cosby, 1971; Gottlieb and Campbell, 1968; Bloom, et al., 1965; Ohlendorf and Kuvlesky, 1968; Reissman, 1969). While most of these studies have compared white and black youth only, two tri-ethnic studies have also reported high aspirations for each of their ethnic samples. The first was a study of urban white, black, and Puerto Rican youth in the northern United States (Antonovsky, 1967), and the second reported on rural white, black, and Mexican-American youth in a southwestern state (Kuvlesky, et al., 1969). No comparable studies of American Indian youth have been reported in the literature. The primary purpose of the research reported in this paper was to partially fill this gap in the research literature by providing information regarding the occupational projections and orientations of an American Indian group, the Mississippi Choctaws.

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Mississippi Choctaws

The more than 4,000 Choctaw Indians in Mississippi are descendents of those Choctaws who resisted forced removal to Oklahoma under an 1830 treaty (DeRosier, 1970). Peterson (1970a, 1970b) has documented the struggles of the tribal remnant to survive both physically and culturally. Labeled as nonwhite by the white population in the region, they were excluded from participation in the economic structure until the rise of the sharecropper system following the Civil War. Thereafter, most Choctaws subsisted as sharecroppers, small farmers, or agricultural day laborers. This employment, despite its low level, enabled many who wished to remain in their traditional homeland to resist a second removal effort on the part of the federal government and made possible the development of seven Choctaw communities in rural areas of east central Mississippi. When the Choctaw Agency was established in Philadelphia, Mississippi in 1918, land purchases in these seven communities established the current reservation.

The decline of farming and rise of industry in the economy of the area in the 1950's resulted in the loss of agricultural jobs by many Choctaws. Older Choctaws were particularly handicapped in finding new employment by their lack of vocational and English skills. Younger Choctaws who had more education and better English skills were almost totally barred by racial discrimination from working in local industries. Another barrier to job attainment was the absence of high school facilities on the reservation until 1964. As a result, almost no Choctaws completed high school prior to this time, and many dropped out

even earlier. This combination of factors promoted increased outmigration of employable Choctaws in the 1960's (Peterson, 1970a).

The passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 served to open the doors of local industrial operations to Choctaws. Surveys made in 1962 and 1968 (Peterson, 1970a) showed that the percentage of household heads employed as operatives increased during this period from 4.6 to 12.1 and non-farm laborers from 13.9 to 22.6. No Choctaw homemakers were reported employed as operatives in 1962, but 13.7 percent were so employed in 1968.

Other more recent changes in national Indian policy and the structure of the Choctaw tribal government have had major influences on the occupational structure of the Choctaw population. Federally-funded tribal programs directed toward increased self-government and reservation development have resulted in the creation of a number of skilled, technical, administrative, and professional jobs on the reservation. Analysis of available Census data (Spencer, 1973) indicated that of Choctaws employed in 1970 approximately 15 percent had "white-collar" jobs (i.e., clerical, sales, administrative, technical, and professional occupations). Although comparable data for 1960 are not available, one source (Peterson, 1970a) shows that only 1.2 percent of household heads were employed in these occupational categories in 1962. Many additional jobs on the reservation which are currently occupied by non-Choctaws or are unfilled could be filled by Choctaws if qualified persons were available.

Two related major problems currently facing the tribe are the low educational and skill levels of its population and

persistently high unemployment rates. The percentage of unemployed household heads was 26.3 in 1962 and 28.9 in 1968 (Peterson, 1970a). A 1971 survey (MCBI, 1972) of all Choctaw males in the labor force showed 28 percent unemployed, a rate only slightly under the 37 percent rate documented for all reservation males in the United States in 1968 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1968).

Analysis of available Census data (Spencer, 1973) indicated that in 1970 approximately one-fifth of the Choctaw families had an income of less than $1,000, one-third received less than $2,000 and almost half received less than $3,000 per year. Only ten percent had an income of $6,000 or above, and the median family income was approximately $3,100.

Because of the expansion in recent years of occupational opportunity for Choctaws both on and off the reservation, it was of interest to the researchers and to the tribe to determine whether the aspirations of Choctaw youth reflect these opportunities. It was also of interest to determine whether the young people aspire to live and work on or near the reservation or to out-migrate. The tribal government recognizes that its future depends, in no small way, upon the occupational aspirations and achievements of its youth.

The Choctaw Study

Permission was granted to the researchers by the Choctaw Agency and the Choctaw Board of Education to conduct a study of the occupational and residential apsirations and expectations of Choctaw high school students early in 1973. Choctaw Central High School is the only high school for Choctaws in Mississippi and

is attended by both day students and boarding students.

During the early stages of the data analysis, a question was raised regarding the status assigned to various occupations by Choctaws. Given the physical and structural isolation, cultural differences, history of restricted access to education and occupations, as well as recent developmental changes taking place on the reservation, it was reasoned that the Choctaw occupational status hierarchy may vary from that of the larger society.

Crosscultural comparisons of ratings of occupational titles from the NORC scale have yielded evidence which suggests the existence of a "universal" occupational prestige hierarchy extending to underdeveloped as well as industrialized societies (Hodge, et al., 1966; Inkeles and Rossi, 1955; Tiryakian, 1958; Thomas, 1962; Armer, 1968). Haller, et al. (1972) have suggested, however, that researchers may have overgeneralized on the basis of research that was restricted primarily to urban areas. In a study of three Brazilian communities which varied in degree of urbanity and isolation, they found evidence to support their hypothesis that occupational prestige correlations would diminish as physical and cultural isolation of samples increased.

A decision was made, therefore, to expand the Choctaw study to include a small-scale, exploratory study of the "general standing" of occupations among Choctaws to provide background information for analyzing the occupational projections of the high school students on the community level.

Methodology

High School Study

A modified form of the S-81 Southern Regional Youth Study questionnaire[2] was administered to all sophomores, juniors and seniors in group sessions of 30-35 students. Each question was read aloud and the students wrote their answers simultaneously. A total of 133 questionnaires were included in the analysis.[3]

The occupational aspirations of the respondents were elicited by the question, "What job would you most like to have as a lifetime job?" Occupational expectations were sought with the question, "What job do you really expect to have most of your life?" The respondents were asked to indicate whether, in the job(s) they had named, they would be an employee of a private company, business, or individual; a government employee; or self-employed. Those who indicated the first or third options were assigned to the category of private employment projections and those who indicated the second option were assigned to the category for government employee projections.

The residential aspirations of the respondents were obtained by asking, "Of the kinds of places listed below, in which one would you most desire to live for the rest of your life?" Choices given were: residence in a city, in a town, in the country but not on a farm, on a farm, and on the reservation. Aspirations for residence in a city or town were interpreted as aspirations for migration from the reservation area, and aspirations for residence in the country, on a farm, or on the reservation were interpreted as preference to live within or near the reservation area. To determine residential expectations, respondents were

asked, "What type of place do you really expect to live most of your life?"

Study of Occupational Status

Seven judges, all of whom were both full-blooded Choctaws and tribal or school administrators, were selected to serve as a "panel of experts" to provide information regarding the statuses assigned to occupations by Choctaws. The panel was used in lieu of a representative sample due to time and expense limitations, but also served to eliminate the problems of communication and lack of knowledge that probably would have arisen among older Choctaws. The panel of Choctaw officials was believed to be a uniquely qualified group to provide the insider's view of the general status assigned to various occupations by the highly homogenous Choctaw population. Similar procedures have been used by both anthropologists and sociologists to elicit local perceptions of the social stratification of individuals and families within a given community as well as other information regarding the structure and culture of a community (e.g., Pelto, 1970; Aceves, 1974; Silverman, 1966; Warner, 1949; Hollingshead, 1949).

The occupations included in the study were those which the high school students named as their (1) occupational aspirations, (2) occupational expectations, (3) parents' aspirations for them, (4) role models' occupations, and (5) family breadwinners' occupations. The judges were asked to order the 94 occupations from low to high, primarily on the basis of their prestige among Choctaws, but to consider additionally several criteria that have been identified as occupational prestige correlates

(Reiss, et al., 1961; Duncan, 1961; Simpson and Simpson, 1960) or that were believed to be locally relevant. The criteria were: (1) the education, skill, training, or experience required for the job; (2) the responsibility involved in the job; (3) the attractiveness of the work; (4) the rewards that accrue to the position; and (5) the security or lack of it inherent in the job.

Each judge worked independently in arranging the occupational titles which had been printed on decks of index cards. In cases where two or more occupations were considered by a judge to be equal in rank, instructions were to assign the same number to each. Rank numbers were later reassigned to the cards in accordance with procedures for handling ties.

To determine the degree of agreement between the judges, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was employed to compare the rankings of each judge to the average of the remaining judges. The correlations obtained ranged from a high of .74 to a low of .23; four were above .50. All were significant at the .001 level, except one which was significant at the .025 level. The rankings of the judges were used to order the occupations into the Choctaw Occupation Index (Table 1). As consistently high agreement between all the judges was not found, the Choctaw Index should be interpreted as no more than an estimate of the prestige assigned to occupations by the Choctaw population.

The Duncan Socioeconomic Status Index (Duncan, 1961; Reiss, et al., 1961) was selected as a base for stratifying the occupational aspirations and expectations of the students according to their status within the larger society. A well-known and

TABLE 1: CHOCTAW OCCUPATION INDEX BY STATUS LEVEL OF OCCUPATION AND COMPARED TO DUNCAN INDEX AND STATUS LEVEL

Occupation and Choctaw Status Level	Choctaw Index	Duncan Index	
	Mean Ranks	Scores	Status Level
High			
School administrator	90	78	High
Teacher	84	72	High
Nurse, professional	82	46	Moderate
Lawyer	81	93	High
Physician or surgeon	79	92	High
Dentist	77	96	High
Technician: Medical or dental	77	48	Moderate
Computer programmer	76	62[a]	Moderate
Tribal chairman	74	54[b]	Moderate
Technician: Electrical or electronic	74	62	Moderate
Electrician	73	44	Moderate
Draftsman	72	67	High
Artist	69	67	High
Social or welfare worker	69	64	Moderate
Sports instructor or coach	67	64	Moderate
Airline pilot	66	79	High
Designer	64	73	High
Guidance counselor	63	74	High
Moderate			
Computer operator	62	47	Moderate
Athlete	62	52	Moderate
Actor	61	60	Moderate
Policeman	61	40	Moderate
Model	61	45[a]	Moderate
Practical nurse	60	22	Low
Secretary	60	61	Moderate
Technician: Other engin./phys. sciences	58	62[c]	Moderate
Forester	58	48	Moderate
Detective, private	58	36	Moderate
Automobile mechanic	55	19	Low
Tribal program coordinator	55	54[b]	Moderate
TWEPT director	55	54[b]	Moderate
Musician	54	52	Moderate
Dental assistant	54	38	Moderate
Instructional aide	53	44[a]	Moderate
Proprietor: Self-employed, construct.	53	51	Moderate
Welder	52	24	Low
Beautitian	51	17	Low

TABLE 1: Continued

Occupation and Choctaw Status Level[1]	Choctaw Index	Duncan Index	
	Mean Ranks	Scores	Status Level
Insurance agent	51	66	High
Sanitary engineering assistant	51	56[a]	Moderate
Carpenter	50	19	Low
Member of armed forces	50	18	Low
Painter: Construction or maintenance	50	16	Low
Dietitian	49	39	Moderate
Mail carrier	49	53	Moderate
Social work aide	48	26[a]	Low
Manager, official or proprietor (salaried): Ind. not reported	48	62	Moderate
Nurse's aides: IHS	47	22[a]	Low
Machinist	47	33	Low
Foreman: Maintenance	46	49[a]	Moderate
Editor or reporter	46	82	High
Natural scientist	45	80	High
Recreation or group worker	45	67	High
Salesman: Wholesale	45	61	Moderate
Operative: Manuf., ship & boat bldg.	44	16	Low
Foreman: Manuf., electrical machinery	43	60	Moderate
Operative: Manuf., motor vehicles	42	21	Low
Foreman: Manuf., nondurable goods	41	53	Moderate
Craftswoman: Tribal	40	32[a]	Low
Sanitary aide: BIA	40	21[a]	Low
Truck driver	40	15	Low
Bank teller	38	52	Moderate
Operative: Nonmanuf., railroads	38	15	Low
Maintenance worker: BIA	38	25[a]	Low
Nurse's aide: Tribal	37	22[a]	Low
Clergyman	36	52	Moderate
Salesclerk	36	39	Moderate
Low			
Construction worker: BIA	34	19[d]	Low
Janitor: BIA	34	9	Low
School bus driver and janitor	34	24[e]	Low
Operative: Manuf., electrical machinery	34	26[f]	Low
Laborer: BIA	33	7[f]	Low
Operative: Manuf., apparel	33	21	Low
Excavating, grading, and road machinery operator	32	24	Low
Operative: Manuf., paints	32	15	Low
Outreach worker: Tribal	32	26	Low
School bus driver	31	24[e]	Low

TABLE 1: Continued

Occupation and Choctaw Status Level	Choctaw Index	Duncan Index	
	Mean Ranks	Scores	Status Level
Operative: Manuf., ind. not reported	31	16	Low
Operative: Manuf., meat products	30	16	Low
Construction worker: Tribal	29	19[d]	Low
Maintenance worker: Tribal	29	25[g]	Low
Operative: Manuf., watches	29	28	Low
Laborer: Construction	25	7	Low
Janitor: Tribal	24	9	Low
Laborers: Nonmanuf., railroads	24	3	Low
Cook (excluding private household)	23	15	Low
Mainstream worker: Tribal	22	8	Low
Operative: Manuf., sawmills	22	7	Low
Laborer: Nonmanuf., ind. not reported	21	6	Low
Laborer: Communications, utilities, and sanitary services	19	6	Low
Laborer: Nonmanuf., wholesale and retail	19	12	Low
TWEPT worker: Tribal	19	8[f]	Low
Laborer: Manuf., sawmills	15	3	Low
Kitchen aide	12	10[a]	Low
Babysitter	8	6[h]	Low

[a]Assigned score; not included in Duncan Index.

[b]Listed in Duncan Index as "Official or administrator: Local public administration." As no distinction is made between levels of administrators, the score of "54" may represent too low an estimate for "Tribal chairman" as it places him on the same level as his subordinates (e.g., Tribal program coordinators and the TWEPT director). The same inflexibility is present for other titles in the Duncan Index (e.g., "Editor or reporter").

[c]Score for "Technician(n.e.c.)".

[d]Score for "Carpenter."

[e]Listed as "Bus-driver" in Duncan Index.

[f]Score for "Laborer: Nonmanufacturing industries."

[g]Listed as "Repairman" in Duncan Index.

[h]Score for "Private household worker: Living-out."

SOURCE: Choctaw Index (Spencer, 1973); Duncan Index (Table B-1, Appendix B, Reiss, et al., 1961).

widely-used index, the Duncan scale has been assessed as the "most analytically powerful occupational scale now in existence" (Lasswell, 1965:439).

The range of scores accompanying titles extracted from the Duncan Index and the mean rankings of the Choctaw Index were in each case divided into three equal sections and designated as "high," "moderate," and "low" occupational status levels (Table 1). Based on these divisions, the occupational aspirations and expectations of the Choctaw students were stratified and assigned a status level within each index. The chi-square statistic was used to determine whether observed differences were statistically significant.

Results

Occupational Aspirations

The occupational aspirations and expectations of the Choctaw high school students are displayed in Table 2. Analysis of the data suggests that the range of aspirations of the students were limited by at least two factors. First, their aspirations were largely restricted to jobs which are locally visible and relevant. Secondly, they were largely limited to occupations which other Choctaws have succeeded in attaining. For example, 60 percent of the students aspired to only eight occupations: teacher, secretary, automobile mechanic, nurse, lab technician, doctor, social worker, and member of armed forces. All of these occupations, except doctor, have been filled by other Choctaws. All of the eight are locally relevant, including service in the armed forces. Military service is a long-established job alternative

TABLE 2: OCCUPATIONS BY STATUS LEVEL[a] AND BY FREQUENCY OF MENTION IN YOUTH STUDY

Occupation and Status Level[a]	Frequency of Mention				
	As Aspiration	As Expectation	As Parental Aspiration	As Occupation of Role Model	Total
High					
Teacher	21	17	13	10	61
Nurse, professional	7	5	11		23
Physician or surgeon	5	4	4	2	15
Technician: Medical or dental	6	4	1		11
Artist	3	2		1	6
Social worker	4	1		1	6
Sports instructor or coach	1	1	1	1	4
Guidance counselor				4	4
Lawyer	2				2
Technician: Electrical	1	1			2
Computer programmer		2			2
Electrician	1			1	2
Draftsman	1	1			2
Designer, interior	1	1			2
Dentist			1		1
Tribal chairman	1				1
Airline pilot	1				1
School administrator				1	1
Moderate					
Secretary	18	16	11	3	48
Automobile mechanic	9	7	3	1	20
Athlete	2		1	12	15
Member of armed forces	4	6	1		11
Salesclerk	1	2	3	2	8

TABLE 2: Continued

Occupation and Status Level[a]	Frequency of Mention				
	As Aspiration	As Expectation	As Parental Aspiration	As Occupation of Role Model	Total
Nurses aide	2	3		2	7
Beautitian	2	1		3	6
Manager or official		4			4
Salesman	1		2	1	4
Forest ranger	2	1			3
Teacher aide		2		1	3
Carpenter	2	1			3
Truck driver	1	2			3
Computer operator	2				2
Welder	1	1			2
Social work aide	1	1			2
Scientist	1	1			2
Clergyman		1		1	2
Actor				1	1
Policeman		1			1
Model	1				1
Technician, aquatic	1				1
Detective, private	1				1
Musician	1				1
Dental assistant				1	1
Proprietor, construction	1				1
Insurance agent	1				1
Mail carrier	1				1
Reporter	1				1
Recreation or group worker		1			1

TABLE 2 : Continued

Occupation and Status Level[a]	Frequency of Mention				
	As Aspiration	As Expectation	As Parental Aspiration	As Occupation of Role Model	Total
Operative, manufacturing boats	1				1
Foreman, manufacturing electrical machines	1				1
Operative, railroad				1	1
Bank teller			1		1
Low					
Construction worker	3	1			4
Operative, manufacturing, ind. not rep.		2		1	3
Janitor		2			2
Laborer, railroad		2			2
Babysitter	1	1			2
Laborer, construction			1		1

[a]According to the Choctaw Index.

for Choctaw males, and many tribal leaders and older Choctaws have had military experience.

When the aspirations of the Choctaw students were stratified on the Choctaw Index, only three percent of the students appeared to aspire to low-status level positions. When stratified on the Duncan Index, however, more than 20 percent of the students were shown as holding low-status level aspirations (Table 3). These findings indicate that while almost all Choctaw youth aspire to occupations which have high or moderate status within their own subsociety, many hold aspirations which rank substantially lower by standards of the larger society.

Table 3. Status Levels of Occupational Aspirations and Expectations of Choctaw High School Students

Occupational Status Level	Choctaw Index	Duncan Index
	Occupational Aspirations[a]	
	(N=118)	(N=118)
High	46.6	30.5
Moderate	50.0	49.2
Low	3.3	20.3
	Occupational Expectations[b]	
	(N=98)	(N=98)
High	39.8	27.5
Moderate	52.0	44.9
Low	8.2	27.6

[a] $\chi^2 = 17.85$; df = 2; $p < .001$.
[b] $\chi^2 = 13.01$; df = 2; $p < .01$.

Occupational Expectations

When asked for their occupational expectations, half of those who answered both questions deflected from their aspirations.

Uncertainty and ambivalence regarding their occupational goals were further demonstrated by the failure of 31 of the 133 respondents to answer one or the other of the aspiration/expectation questions. Thus, of the total group, less than 30 percent had occupational goals which they expected to achieve. As a group, their expectations were not significantly lower in status than their aspirations, but, of those who deflected, males tended significantly more often than females to alter their aspirations by lowering their expectations.

Parental Aspirations

Less than one-third (29 percent) of the students reported that one or both of their parents had made occupational recommendations to them. It was also found that 65 per cent of those parents who had made suggestions recommended only three occupations--teacher, nurse, and secretary (Table 2). As these job titles suggest, a strong relationship was found between sex of the students and the occurrence of expressed parental aspirations. Of those parents expressing aspirations, 73 percent were directed toward daughters and only 27 percent toward sons. The absence of parental guidance may not indicate lack of interest in the occupational futures of their offspring so much as a lack of knowledge of the occupational possibilities open to their children and particularly desirable occupational roles for males.

Role Models

Only 42 percent of the respondents reported that they knew someone whom they would "like to fashion their lives after" (Table 2). Half of the role models were teachers, guidance counselors, or athletes. All were occupations highly visible on the reservation or on the mass media.

Residential Aspirations

The sample was almost evenly divided between aspiration to reside on or near the reservation (51 percent) and aspiration to out-migrate (49 percent). Females aspired to urban residence as often as did males. Deflection of residential aspirations favored residence on or near the reservation, resulting in only 40 percent expecting to leave the reservation area.

Employer Projections

A significantly greater proportion of the young people aspired to government employment (63.4 percent) than aspired to employment by private business or industry (36.6 percent). When asked regarding their occupational expectations, an even greater proportion of the respondents reported that they expected to be employed by the government (74.6 percent).

The data showed that a majority of the young people who aspired or expected to migrate to an urban area nevertheless expected to obtain government jobs. Fifty-seven percent of those who aspired to live in an urban area, and 65 percent of those who expected to live in an urban area, expected to be employed by the government. Except for those who projected military careers or teaching in public schools, this seems to indicate a misunderstanding on the part of the students of the nature of employment in the larger society.

Status of Occupations

Although not strictly comparable, an estimate of the degree of correlation of the rank order of occupations within the Choctaw and Duncan indices was sought through application of r_s. A correlation of .77 was observed, which was significant at the .001 level.

While this correlation indicates a strong relationship between the two indices, it masks extreme differences in the statuses of selected occupations (Table 4). It was recognized that minor variations between the two indices did not justify interpretation, but that extreme variations might be meaningful. Close examination of Tables 1 and 4 suggests that the judges were deviant (i.e., in relation to the Duncan Index) in their placement of selected professional occupations and that they placed extremely high valuation on certain technical, skilled, and semiskilled occupations. Analysis of these variations suggests that cultural and structural factors unique to the reservation may have influenced their standing.

Because of the generally low educational and skill levels of adult Choctaws, occupations within the technical or skilled levels apparently are valued for their accessibility and, thus, their high degree of relevance to the Choctaw population. On the other hand, professional occupations which have little relevance to Choctaws appear to be assigned low status. It seems unlikely that the judges, most of whom have had post-high school educational experience, are not knowledgeable of the status assigned to scientists and editors by the dominant society. It does appear that the judges complied with instructions by arranging the occupations according to what they perceived their prestige to be among the Choctaw population.

The derogation of several occupations may be attributed to the characteristics of persons filling those occupations on the reservation. For example, recreation workers, clergymen, and bus drivers on the reservation are part-time positions and/or

TABLE 4: DIFFERENTIAL ORDERING OF OCCUPATIONS WITHIN CHOCTAW INDEX IN COMPARISON TO DUNCAN INDEX[a]

Occupation	Difference[a]	Occupation	Difference[a]
Overevaluation[b]		Underevaluation[b]	
Automobile mechanic	+38.5	Natural scientist	-47.0
Practical nurse	+37.0	Editor or reporter	-45.5
Nurse, professional	+37.0	Recreation or group worker	-40.0
Beautitian	+36.0	Clergyman	-34.5
Painter: Constr. or maintenance	+33.0	Foreman: Manufacturing electrical machinery	-31.5
Electrician	+31.5	Salesman	-30.5
Technician: Medical or dental	+31.0	Bank teller	-29.0
Member of armed forces	+30.0	Operative: Manufacturing watches	-29.0
Carpenter	+27.5	Foreman: Manufacturing nondurable goods	-27.5
Welder	+22.5	Foreman: Maintenance	-27.0
Policeman	+22.0	Insurance agent	-24.0
Detective, private	+21.0	Outreach worker	-21.0
Operative: Manuf., ship building	+20.0	Salesclerk	-20.0
Computer operator	+19.5	School bus driver	-18.0
Model	+19.0	Operative: Manufacturing, electrical machinery	-15.5
Tribal chairman	+17.5	Excavating, grading, or road machinery operator	-15.5
Operative: Nonmanuf., railroads	+16.5		
Laborer	+16.5		
Truck driver	+15.5		
Janitor	+15.0		
Dental assistant	+14.5		

[a] Comparisons made in this table are with reference to the rank-order positions of the occupations within the two indexes.

[b] In relation to the Duncan Index.

filled by persons with little education. The consistent downgrading of "foremen" in each instance in which that title appears apparently is a cultural reaction against the practice of placing one worker in a superior position over other workers. One of the writers has worked with the Choctaws for a number of years and has observed that respect is delegated to a Choctaw leader only if he works alongside the other men rather than restricting his activity to that of overseer.

Discussion

The Choctaw data demonstrate a great deal of ambivalence on the part of the students with reference to their occupational and residential goals. They also suggest a lack of awareness by both the students and their parents of occupational possibilities open to Choctaw youth both on and off the reservation.

The students appear to have restricted their aspirations, and to an even greater degree their expectations, to the narrow range of occupations which are visible on the reservation and which other Choctaws have succeeded in attaining. Many of the students seemed to be unaware of the potential personal impact of the substantial expansion of occupational opportunity on the reservation. Lack of knowledge on the part of many of the students of occupational realities outside the reservation was demonstrated by the finding that more than a majority of the students who aspire and/or expect to leave the reservation nevertheless expect to be employed by the government.

These findings demonstrate need for a program of career orientation and guidance in the education of Choctaw youth.[4]

Many young people are hampered by lack of knowledge of the world of work, but this lack of preparedness is accentuated for reservation Indian youth. The realization of the potential of Indian youth, as well as the continued growth of Choctaw self-determination and reservation development, are linked to the need for a greater diversity of occupational aspirations and achievement by young Choctaws.

The Choctaw Occupation Index was constructed as a community-level base of analysis for the occupational projections of the Choctaw students. As the Index was not based on a representative sample, it must be viewed as no more than an estimate of the Choctaw occupational status hierarchy. This segment of the study represents an exploratory effort to tap the occupational prestige perceptions of the Mississippi Choctaw. A broader-based study is projected for the near future.

The findings of the prestige study coupled with those of the high school study do strongly suggest, however, that Mississippi Choctaws vary from the dominant society in their evaluations of selected occupations. Several extreme differences in the order of occupations in the Choctaw and Duncan indexes appear to indicate that structural and cultural factors peculiar to the reservation communities influenced the judges' occupational evaluations. Further, stratification of the aspirations of the students on the two indices showed that while almost all the students had occupational aspirations which have high or moderate status within their own reference group, their aspirations ranked significantly lower when stratified on the Duncan Index.

These findings suggest that researchers should take the possibility of variant occupational perceptions into consideration in assessing the occupational aspirations and expectations of minority youth. They further suggest the need, noted by Haller, et al. (1972) and Armer (1968), for futher study of the prestige assigned to occupations by isolated populations.

Notes

[1]For a comprehensive bibliography of studies related to the occupational aspirations and expectations of youth, see Kuvlesky and Reynolds (1970).

[2]The Southern Regional Youth Study is a research project conducted by a number of cooperating southern states of the educational, occupational, and residential aspirations and expectations of southern youth.

[3]Only three questionnaires were eliminated from the analysis. Two were completed by students who were members of another tribal group and the third was eliminated because of inadequate answers.

[4]Proposals for vocational and career education programs in the Choctaw school system have been funded for the 1974 school year.

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